

EWA DATA-BUKOWSKA

Jagiellonian University, Kraków

ORCID: 0000-0002-8105-235X ♦ DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0014.6686

## **Translation as a source of information on text creation – the case of sentence openings in Norwegian and German**

### **Summary**

The paper examines the way declarative sentences are introduced in a text in two closely related languages – Norwegian and German. It aims to reveal to what extent the languages under investigation are similar when it comes to meaning construal in this respect and which mechanisms may be classified as language specific. For the purposes of the study, the Norwegian item *DET*, which possesses multiple functions in sentence openings, has been chosen as a point of departure in a detailed contrastive analysis based on translation data taken from a parallel corpus. The research shows clear similarities in word order between Norwegian and German in sentence openings. However, in German, the notional subject, complex adverbials and even objects, are clearly preferred as thematic and most prominent parts of an event, while they typically appear in the sentence-final position in Norwegian. These differences in meaning construal are explained on the basis of different perspectives adopted in German and Norwegian – a narrow point of view in the former and a distant one in the latter.

**Keywords:** functional sentence perspective, literary translation hypothesis, contrastive analysis

## **Przekład jako źródło informacji o tworzeniu tekstów – na przykładzie inicjalnej części zdania oznajmującego w języku norweskim i niemieckim**

### **Streszczenie**

Niniejszy artykuł analizuje sposoby rozpoczynania zdań oznajmujących w tekście w dwóch blisko spokrewnionych językach - norweskim i niemieckim. Ma na celu pokazanie w jakim zakresie badane języki są podobne pod tym względem, a jakie mechanizmy można zaklasyfikować jako specyficzne dla danego języka. W przeprowadzonym badaniu za podstawę szczegółowej analizy kontrastywnej, opartej na danych tłumaczeniowych, wybrano zdania zawierające w swojej inicjalnej części norweską jednostkę leksykalną *DET*, spełniającą wiele funkcji w tym języku. Analiza została przeprowadzona w oparciu o materiał językowy zaczerpnięty z wielojęzycznego korpusu równoległego. Badanie pokazuje wyraźne podobieństwa zachodzące między j. norweskim a j. niemieckim na poziomie inicjalnego szyku zdania

w wypowiedzeniach w tekście. Jednak w języku niemieckim podmiot pojęciowy, złożone okoliczniki, a nawet dopełnienia są wyraźnie preferowane jako tematyczne i najbardziej wyraziste elementy zdarzenia, o którym mowa. W języku norweskim zwykle pojawiają się one natomiast w części finalnej zdania. Zaobserwowane różnice są wyjaśniane w oparciu o różne perspektywy preferowane w omawianych językach na płaszczyźnie konstruowania treści w tekście – postrzeganie zdarzenia z bliska w j. niemieckim i z oddalenia w j. norweskim.

**Wyrazy klucze:** funkcjonalna perspektywa zdania, tłumaczenie dosłowne, analiza kontrastywna

## Introduction

Norwegian and German are closely related languages showing some clear grammatical similarities. They both are verb-second (V2) languages, which means that they have grammaticalized the position for the finite verb as the second item in the word order scheme of the main clause. Moreover, they have a grammaticalized subject position, which results in the fact that the subject is allowed to be placed either before the V2 or immediately after it. The subject is also expected to be explicitly expressed in the sentence, which, among other things, causes that language items with maximally schematic meaning are used in the function of the so-called formal subject (e.g. the Norwegian *det* or the German *es*, *das*). The present paper examines a phenomenon which has its roots in these grammatical similarities and pertains to the way declarative sentences (represented by a single main clause formally starting with a capital letter) are introduced in the two languages in a text. For the purposes of the study, the Norwegian item *DET*, which possesses multiple functions in sentence openings, has been chosen as a point of departure in a detailed analysis based on translations.

The aim of the investigation is to reveal the main regularities pertaining to text construal in Norwegian and German with regard to sentence openings in the specified range. More precisely, it aims to find out to what extent the languages under investigation are similar when it comes to meaning construal in sentence openings used in a text and which mechanisms of such construal may be classified as language specific. As regards the similarities, the investigation focuses in particular on finding out to what degree in Norwegian-to-German translation the source text sentence openings are subjected to conceptual “copying” (or priming) while being rendered into the target language. This is done in the light of the hypothesis about literal translation that has been undergoing a kind of revival in studies on translation in the recent years. In this way, some information on the cognitive processes underlying text production in translation as well as on the functioning of a bilingual mind may also be revealed. In the analytical part of the article I am going to find answers to these questions on the basis of the translations from the *Oslo Multilingual Corpus* (the OMC)<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Oslo Multilingual Corpus (1999-2008), the Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo. The OMC is a product of the interdisciplinary research project Languages in Contrast (SPRIK), directed by Stig Johansson and Cathrine Fabricius-Hansen, and compiled by the OMC corpus team (<https://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/services/omc/team/>). For more information on the corpus see:

The issue of sentence openings has been a subject of study for e.g. Altenberg (1998), Hasselgård (1997, 1998, 2004), Johansson (2005), Rørvik (2004). However, these studies concern mainly English and Norwegian (or Swedish). Among corpus-based studies that focus on differences in text creation in Norwegian-German-Norwegian translation, analyses conducted by e.g. Fabricius-Hansen (1998) and Ramm (2004) may be mentioned. This type of research is to be seen as particularly inspiring for the present article.

### Sentence openings in Norwegian and German

A sentence opening is understood in the paper as the initial part of a sentence extending from the first word up to the finite verb. This part is called *forfelt* in *Norsk Referansegrammatikk* (NRG) (Faarlund, Lie, Vannebo 1997: 858–859) and the term will be used in the paper as synonymous to sentence opening and sentence initial. The main principle that governs the choice of sentence openings in Norwegian and German is that in accordance with the V2 constraint, prototypically only one clause element is allowed in this position. The other clause elements have to be moved to the position after the finite verb.

In both languages, the *forfelt* is communicatively important. The notion is strictly connected with the opposition theme-rheme and two information principles – end-focus and end-weight (NRG 1997: 854). They play an important role in text construal in all languages. Yet, the preferred patterns of their application may be different in particular languages.

According to the functional sentence perspective (Halliday 1994), the order of words in a clause (which is seen as a message) mirrors an increase in communicative dynamism. It is believed that what is treated by the speaker as contextually given (already known, predictable or simply recoverable) for the addressee is placed before what is regarded as new. Consequently, the initial part of the sentence is the theme, a communicative point of departure of the message, gradually extended by the rest of the sentence, the so called rheme (Halliday 1994: 36–38, NRG: 856–857).

The literature defines the functions of the theme diversely (see Chafe 1994: 161–185, Hasselgård 1998: 148–149). However, the initial part of the sentence in general is seen as dealing with specifying some kind of a conceptual ground or a frame for a described action. As the sentence opening may vary in form, it may express different types of information, e.g. pertaining to the subject, to spatial, temporal, epistemological or textual orientation, contrast, elicitation, etc. (Chafe 1994: 168). Therefore, the theme plays an important role in establishing text continuity and coherence while the rheme develops and shifts in a text. It is concerned with the ways in which the different parts of a text fit together. Moreover, according to Chafe (1994: 136), it always includes a viewer from whose point of view it is developed.

On the other hand, what is regarded as rhematic (new) is also seen as communicatively more crucial, which at a very general level underlies the communicative principle of the end-focus. Therefore, a newly-introduced element is also perceived as highlighted. The end-weight principle, in turn, pertains to a cognitively and iconically motivated rule that before introducing new information the addressee needs to be somewhat prepared to receive the message so that an overload of their perceptual system can be avoided. As new information is usually expressed by more complex language structures, such elements are put forward to the right in a sentence. It is believed that this kind of sentence construal makes the comprehension of messages easier (cf. Wong 2010: 38).

The three principles are complementary and as such need to be taken into account in understanding how sentences function in a text. Since the thematic choice is contextually determined and, as Daneš (1974: 109, after Hasselgård 1998: 148) points out, cannot be “fortuitous, unmotivated, and without any structural connection to the text”, it may be assumed that an analysis of sentence openings in the source (Norwegian) and the target (German) texts will reveal patterns of text construal in these languages on all levels described above.

### Sentence openings from the perspective of translation research

From the point of view of translation research, the meeting of Norwegian and German in linguistic renditions in a text encourages one to ask an additional intriguing question, namely, to what extent are the translators willing to “copy” or prime the source structures in the target text in a situation when grammatical similarities are so obvious between languages? This issue appears in the context of the current re-introduction of the so-called literal translation hypothesis into studies on translation (see Halverson 2015 for a thorough discussion). However, taking this hypothesis into account in contrastive discourse analysis may extend the research perspective and highlight the question about similarities that appear between two languages – an issue that is still an underappreciated aspect of contrastive studies, translation studies, and research on cognition.

According to this hypothesis, literal translation is preferred to other strategies in translation, because it is cognitively natural and economic.

The first translation scholar to notice cognitive economy as an underlying translation phenomenon was Levý (1967). He observed that during the mapping process translators intuitively apply those solutions that are connected with minimal mental effort, i.e. by using the so-called minimax strategy. Reference to cognitive economy can also be found in the work of Ivir (1981), who stresses that translators begin the process of establishing equivalence by determining formal correspondences between languages used in translation and they opt away from such solutions only when their use becomes impossible. The formal aspect of the mapping is, however, always present in their consciousness (Ivir 1981: 58). Cognitive economy manifests itself here in literal renditions, which are commonly associated with form-oriented translation.

The same line of thought about translation may be seen in Toury's "law of interference" (Toury 1995). The scholar sees this procedure as one of the main laws underlying the translation process, during which "phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text" (Toury 1995: 275). In the context outlined here, it also seems important to mention a study by Tirkkonen-Condit (2005), in which the author argues that literal translation is a default translation procedure that is, however, cognitively preferred to others, both by novice and professional translators.

Nevertheless, literal translation is not only treated as a default procedure. From the cognitive perspective, literal translation can be interpreted in terms of structural priming, which is cognitively basic (Henson 2009: 1060).

According to Chesterman (2011), literal translation is strengthened due to the entrenchment of linguistic patterns occurring in the languages meeting in translation. Such patterns are based on a formal similarity between such languages and pertain to, for instance, thematic order, voice, syntactic structure (Chesterman 2011: 27, after Halverson 2015: 314). As Malmkjær (1993: 287) points out, "the translator normally works with the source text before his very eyes". Therefore, in an actual translation task the semantic representation constituting the core of translation must interact with "the visual text representation of the source text". When a translator reads a source text structure, a specific element in the target language is primed due to the close physical similarity of the prime and probe in memory links. If languages share procedures for building sentences, the use of such procedures in one language may enhance their accessibility in the other (Loebell & Bock 2003: 809, Filipović 2014: 213). It is also believed that elements of a similar form have strong links across languages and word order is an important factor in syntactic priming (Hartsuiker, Pickering & Velkamp 2004: 412). According to Filipović (2014: 215), this is "the most efficient way of organizing multilingual information" in a bilingual (or multilingual) mind.

Taking into account the above-mentioned hypothesis, which, however, is not understood in terms of a default procedure, but as a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate word-for-word transfer of a source text structure into a target text (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 33), it may be assumed that an analysis of literal translations may reveal similarities occurring between languages at the level of sentence and text construal, as well as indicate their representation in a bilingual mind. According to Vinay & Darbelnet (1995: 34), "[this] unique solution which is reversible and complete in itself [...] is most common when translating between two languages of the same family [...], and even more so when they also share the same culture".

The functions of the Norwegian *DET* in the initial part of a sentence

The Norwegian language item *DET* in the sentence opening in the source language provides an interesting starting-point for an investigation on how text structures are created in actual translations in languages with grammaticalized word order.

*DET* is a multifunctional language item both in *bokmål* and *nynorsk* (see NRG: 306–311, 328, 331, 332, 678–680, 1014–1016; Holmes & Enger 2018: 144–149). It can function as follows<sup>2</sup>:

1. A definite article in an NP  
**Det** gjenvunne adelsskap hade gitt familien rett til å eie gårder med livegne bønder...
2. A personal (neutral) pronoun  
Jeg gikk bort til skrivebordet. **Det** var blåst.
3. Referring anaphorically to the whole sentence (the previous discourse)  
Dessuten kunne jeg kunsten å vente. **Det** hadde jeg tidlig måttet lære.
4. A demonstrative anaphoric pronoun  
Presten så forbauset på henne før han nikket. Ja, i 1808. **Det** året begikk presten her oppe sin store feil, ...
5. In a determining function  
**Det** jeg hadde i hendene, var ei lita bok.
6. A formal subject in presentatives, i.e. introducing a new object  
**Det** er ikke vår skyld, sier pappa.  
**Det** studerer ti tusen studentar i Trondheim. (NRG: 680)
7. A formal subject in sentences including extraposition  
**Det** gjer meg deprimert å gå på kino. (NRG: 680)
8. A formal subject in clefts  
**Det** er den jeg er redd.
9. A formal subject in impersonal (agentless) constructions (including meteorological conditions)  
**Det** lukter sol og insekter og barnåler, ...
10. Impersonal passives  
**Det** fortelles at han snublet over den høye terskelen ...

English translations of the examples above are presented in the analytical part of the article.<sup>3</sup> At this stage of the research, it is important to stress that the Norwegian item *DET* (in its different functions) represents the theme. On the one hand, its presence in the sentence opening refers to previous (or available) context and establishes text continuity and coherence (types 1–5). On the other hand, the item's primary function is to prepare the listener for some new information by putting it forward to the right in a sentence (types 6–8). Moreover, it presents the subject as semantically light and maximally schematic (unspecified) (types 9–10). Therefore, the different functions of *DET* allow for an analysis of a full spectrum of mechanisms underlying text construal as related to preceding and following context, as well as to the character of the subject.

<sup>2</sup> If not otherwise stated, the examples used in this article are taken from the OMC.

<sup>3</sup> All translations of the Norwegian and German examples into English are mine – E. D.-B.

### The aims of the study and methodological remarks

The data for the investigation come from two databases included in the OMC: the ge-no-ge sub-corpus and the no-en-ge sub-corpus, both classified as parallel corpora. The former is based on original texts and their translations (German-to-Norwegian, Norwegian-to-German), both fiction and non-fiction. The latter is smaller and less balanced, as it includes mainly fictional texts, Norwegian originals and their English and German translations.<sup>4</sup>

A total of 2146 occurrences of *DET* in the *forfelt* position in Norwegian and their German translations were automatically extracted from the corpus by the use of the search and post-processing tool Glossa (<https://www.hf.uio.no/iln/english/about/organization/text-laboratory/services/glossa/index.html>). Yet, all identified concordances were additionally searched manually by close reading. The investigation considered only declarative sentences, represented by a single main clause (formally starting with a capital letter). That meant that sentences introduced by conjunctions were ignored. The item was represented in all its functions, both by *DET* in its nominal function or as part of a phrase (functioning as clause elements).

Subsequently, the linguistic data was processed according to the following, more detailed research questions:

1. To what extent is the Norwegian *DET* conceptually “copied”, i.e. rendered by its congruent correspondences (Johansson 2007), in sentence openings in translations into German?
2. What other elements appear in the *forfelt* position in German translations of Norwegian sentences including the initial *DET* and what priorities in the choice of sentence openings do the German translations show?
3. What can changes made in the translations reveal about the patterns pertaining to text construal in both languages?

The congruent correspondence was understood, according to Johansson’s definition, as “what is observed in a corpus” as a result of a particular translational solution (Johansson 2007: 5). It was treated as a target language structure that did not differ in form from the source in translation (i.e. one-word source text expression corresponded to a one-word expression in the target language.) However, it was checked that the source and the target items performed similar functions in the sentence.

The corpus data was an important part of the investigation. The translations collected in the sub-corpora represented the work of competent, professional translators (as opposed to translators with insufficient qualifications). It was also assumed that the analysed sentences revealed optional changes in translations from Norwegian to German. As several clause elements are viable options for the initial position in German, the translator choosing a particular word order had a range of choices. Nevertheless, the texts were subjected to editorial revision increasing their acceptability.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on these sub-corpora see: <https://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/services/knowledge-resources/omc/sub-corpora/>.



ty in the target language culture. The applied patterns of expression were approved prompting the perception of coherence and a communicative goal within a particular context. The readers of translations conceived them as complete texts and could make sense of such texts as wholes. Therefore, it was assumed that the solutions applied in the texts are representative of the given target language text, just as they represent the source language characteristics.

The corpus was seen as reflecting the conventions of a given society using language communicatively. Therefore, we can talk about some patterns of text construal in Norwegian and German identified on the basis of translations.

The results of the analysis

As for the first research question: by completing the inventory of congruent German correspondences to the Norwegian *DET* clear similarities in the *forfelt* structure between these languages were confirmed.

The analysis revealed that 1254 (58.43%) of the German translations of *DET* in its different functions were classified as congruent in the sentence initial position. They mainly encompassed sentences including the German *es* and *das*, but a close reading of concordances also made it possible to classify such items as *man*, *dies*, *da*, *was*, *er*, *der*, etc. as congruent. It was confirmed that the item chosen as congruent to *DET* was the only possible equivalent in the sentence, i.e. that no other structure could be classified as such.

The variety and the number of language items used to render *DET* in sentence openings in German is shown in Table 1, while instances of such congruent correspondences are presented in (1) below:

Table 1. Congruent correspondences to the Norwegian *DET*

	es	das	man	dies	da	was	er	sie[sg.]	die	der	elaborated	Total
<b>DET</b>	650	405	21	9	15	28	7	6	30	24	59	1254
%	30.28	18.87	0.97	0.41	0.69	1.30	0.32	0.27	1.39	1.11	2.74	58.43

Particular items used as correspondences in German mirrored different functions of the Norwegian *DET*, e.g. *DET* used initially as an article was conceptually “copied” as the German article *das*. The same pertained to *die* or *der*. *Es*, *das* and *man* represented *DET* as the formal subject, etc.

- (1)
- Det** verste er at jeg vet ikke hvorfor .
- Das** Schlimmste ist, daß ich nicht weiß, warum.
- [**The** worst (thing) is that I don’t know why.]

- Det** lukter sol og insekter ...
- Es** riecht nach Sonne und Insekten ...
- [**It** smells of sun and insects ...]



**Det** gjelder et par av våre mest sentrale begreper , ...  
**Dies** betrifft zwei der in unserer Studie zentralsten Begriffe, ...  
 [It applies to a few of our most central concepts, ...]

**Det** er ikke vår skyld...  
**Das** ist nicht unsere Schuld ...  
 [It is not our fault ...]

**Det** jeg hadde i hendene, var ei lita bok.  
**Was** ich in Händen hielt, war ein Büchlein.  
 [What I had in my hands was a little book.]

**Det** fortelles at han snublet over den høye terskelen ...  
**Man** erzählt, daß er über die hohe Schwelle [...] gestolpert ... sei ...  
 [It is said that he stumbled across the high threshold ...]

Dessuten kunne jeg kunsten å vente. **Det** hadde jeg tidlig måttet lære.  
 Außerdem beherrschte ich die Kunst des Wartens. **Die** hatte ich schon früh lernen müssen.  
 [Additionally, I knew the art of waiting. I had to learn **that** early.]

Jeg gikk bort til skrivebordet. **Det** var blåst .  
 Ich ging zu dem Schreibtisch. **Er** war absolut leer .  
 [I walked over to the desk. **It** was empty.]

The collected congruent correspondences can be divided into two main groups: means of continuity and coherence construal and means of end-focus and end-weight construal. Therefore, it may be stated that in such cases in general the identified similarities in the patterns of text construal pertained to these dimensions.

Additionally, a detailed analysis of concordances revealed a phenomenon of the elaboration of *DET* in the *forfelt* position in a German translation. The elaboration was a result of some changes applied by the translator due to the preferred ways of meaning construal in German. In such cases *DET* was rendered as the German *darüber, dann, dazu, sonst, daraus, also*, etc., all indicating text continuity and coherence. On the other hand, the Norwegian schematic (formal) subject became elaborated in German sentences by the use of language items that can be seen as more specified in meaning, e.g. *wir, sie* [pl.], *du* or even an NP. This procedure was confirmed in 59 cases and it is illustrated with examples in (2).

(2)

**Det** kunne de fortelle litt om.  
**Darüber** konnten sie einiges erzählen.  
 [They could tell a lot **about that**.]

**Det** kjentes som om hodet var svulmet opp...

**Sie** hatte das Gefühl, daß der Kopf angeschwollen war...

**Det** var blankt nei.

**Die Antwort** war ein glattes Nein.

[**It** felt like the head was swollen ...]

[**She** had a feeling that the head was swollen ...]

[**It** was a definite no.]

[**The answer** was a definite no.]

From the perspective of contrastive analysis the highlighted items were to be classified as congruent correspondences to the Norwegian *DET*. Yet, their communicative function was somehow different from the one of the source text item. They all indicated that the German text was expected to express continuity and coherence relations more explicitly than they had been signalled in the source text. In this respect, Norwegian was clearly more schematic. On the other hand, they disclosed a preference for notional and specified subjects in German – a pattern of text construal that was also revealed in the second part of the conducted research.

As to the second research question: the analysis confirmed that several other elements appeared in the *forfelt* position in the German translations of Norwegian sentences. Such structures were placed in sentence openings due to the syntactic changes applied by the translators, but they were not correspondent to the initial *DET*. Table 2 below shows the main types of such changes in the collected data.

**Table 2.** Changes in sentence openings in Norwegian-to-German translations

The type of the change	N	%
Notional subject thematized	385	17.94
Clause-final adverbials thematized	376	17.52
Direct or indirect object and predicate thematized	41	1.91
Other	90	4.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>41.56</b>

The analysis showed that in German the notional subject was distributed in the sentence opening. Thus, it was repositioned from the rheme to the theme position in this language, while in Norwegian it was clearly rhematic. This procedure, illustrated in (3) below, was applied in 385 (nearly 18%) cases and can be seen as the dominant one in the analysed language data.

(3)

Det gikk **sju uker**.

**Sieben Wochen** vergingen.

[It took **seven weeks**.]

[**Seven weeks** passed.]

The observed pattern pertained in particular to formally complex subjects representing heavy chunks of information. They were moved to the right in Norwegian, confirming the relevance of the end-weight principle in this language. German, on the contrary, seemed communicatively left oriented. The example in (4) shows this type of repositioning the notional subject.

(4)

Det gjorde ikke saken bedre **at brødrene like etter morens begravelse mottok nyheten om Pusjkins død.**

**Daß die Brüder kurz nach Beerdigung ihrer Mutter vom Tode Puschkins erfuhren,** machte alles nur noch schlimmer.

[It didn't make any sense **that the brothers received the news of Pushkin's death just after his mother's funeral.**]

This difference in the pattern of sentence construal in a text was apparent in the case of renditions of Norwegian cleft sentences. In Norwegian, the subject was placed to the right, rhematized, and highlighted in a cleft sentence – something that is typical of this language. In German, on the contrary, it occurred as the sentence opening, was construed as thematic and accessible for the addressee.

(5)

**Det var moren** som lærte dem å lese og skrive. [It was **the mother** who taught them to read and write.]

**Die Mutter** brachte ihnen Lesen und Schreiben bei. [**The mother** taught them to read and write.]

Moreover, what was conceived as setting in Norwegian (adverbials) became a notional subject in German (an acting thing, i.e. something), as in the examples in (6). This, in turn, indicated that an action has an explicitly expressed agent, even though it was a less prototypical one (i.e. not construed as an acting human being).

(6)

Det dufter **fra engene.** [It smells **of the meadows.**]

**Die Wiesen** duften. [**The meadows** smell.]

Det kryr av rotter **i hele London, ...** [It is teeming with rats **all over London, ...**]

**Ganz London** wimmelt von Ratten, ... [**All of London** is teeming with rats, ...]

As the theme has a lower information value than the rheme, it was concluded that the German subject is not highlighted but that it is treated as an obvious element of an action chain. As such, it is conceptually prominent and accessible. On the other hand, the investigation revealed that in Norwegian the notional subject generally is seen as less prominent than in German. Therefore, it is put to the right in a sentence and thus highlighted to a different degree. Moreover, the analysis confirmed that German prefers notional (specified or personalized) subjects, while they are construed as schematic in Norwegian.

The analysis also showed that in German different types of adverbials were distributed in the sentence opening. This procedure was applied in 376 (17.50 %) cases and is exemplified in (7). This was the preferred way of construing meaning even though the formal subject, e.g. *es*, occurred as a congruent correspondence (equivalent) of *DET* in German translations.

(7)

Det ble stille **i kupéen.****Im Abteil** wurde es still.[It was quiet **in the compartment.**]

The pre-verb part of a German sentence could be of great complexity, expanding to a subordinate clause functioning as an adverbial, as in the examples in (8).

(8)

Det skjedde noe merkelig **mens jeg betraktet bildet og så bakgrunnens flimrende fargeflekker.****Während ich dastand und das Bild betrachtete, die flimmernden Farbflecken des Hintergrunds,** geschah etwas Merkwürdiges.[lit. It happened something strange **as I looked at the picture and saw the shimmering colour spots of the background.**]Det begynte å svi så forferdelig i venstre foten **etter at jeg hade fyrte opp i ovnen.****Nachdem ich den Ofen geheizt hatte,** begann es im linken Fuß fürchterlich zu brennen .[It started to burn so terribly in my left foot **after I had fired up the oven.**]

Moreover, in German sentences the initial adverbial was also deduced from the context or simply added by the translator, as in (9).

(9)

Det var min jobb å dra høyet fram til he-sjene.[It was my job to pull the hay up to the hay racks.]**Später** mußte ich dann das Heu zu den Trockengestellten ziehen.[**Later** I had to pull the hay to the hay racks.]Det kan da ikke være så.[It cannot be so.]**Also** kann es doch gar nicht so.[**Thus,** it cannot be so.]

In such cases, the aim was to make the text more coherent and thus accessible for the readers.

The frequent positioning of adverbials in the initial part of the sentence in German indicated differences in thematic choices in text construal across both languages under investigation. Also here, the information from the right was moved to the left in German, which seemed communicatively left oriented, while Norwegian applied the end-weight principle. Thus, similarly to the notional subject, the German settings, not infrequently specified in detail, were conceived as prominent and accessible in this way.

Reordering in German sentences also took place in the case of a direct object, indirect object and predicate. They were put clause-initially in the theme position, as shown in the examples in (10). Also in such cases, the distribution of information was different in the translations – it was moved to the right in Norwegian and to the left in German.

(10)

Det er for sånne som deg og persianervenninnene dine at menn har slitt seg ihjel ...

**Für solche wie dich und deine Persianerfreundinnen** haben sich die Männer zu Tode geschuftet ...

[It is **for such as you and your Persian friends** that men have died ...]

Det er gult og ørkenaktig omkring ham.

**Golden und wüstenartig** ist es um ihn herum.

[It is **golden and desert-like** around him.]

In Norwegian, the fronting of the object and predicate is marked. It is connected with a high degree of topicality and contrast. In German, this operation seems clearly less marked and may be used as an ordinary means of development of text continuity and coherence.

The category “Other” in Table 2 above encompasses the concordances in which distinguishing the initial part of a sentence was not possible. That is why some language data (4.29 %) was excluded from the analysis.

### Summary

Even though the conducted study was very limited in its scope and may appear as a simplification of a complex problem, the use of the corpus has made it possible to capture some very clear similarities and differences pertaining to text construal in Norwegian and German at the level of sentence openings. It also allowed us to see a few regularities in detail while finding an answer to the third research question.

It has been proved that 58% of sentences in Norwegian and German have a similar word order in the source and target texts in sentence openings including *DET*. Thus, conceptual “copying” of the source text structures into the target text occurs to a great extent, indicating that the formal patterns of meaning construal in the two languages are used efficiently (cf. e.g. Hasselgård 1998 for a higher result for English). In this respect, the literal translation hypothesis has been proved. Moreover, looking for support for this hypothesis, we can generally assume that patterns of text construal pertaining to continuity, coherence, end-focus and end-weight principles are similar in such cases, too. Therefore, it may be concluded that the existing grammatical similarity between languages under discussion presented in the initial part of this article is conceptually expanded to other aspects of their functioning in texts. It may be expected that such shared patterns may be used by translators as bilingual language users on a regular basis.

Taking into consideration the pattern of Norwegian and German main clauses, it may be concluded that both languages reveal the placement of a notional subject in the rheme position. However, the target-language-specific aspects also play a role in construing meaning in text production. In German, the construction of the notional

subject as the thematic and most prominent part of an event is clearly preferred. It is widespread when notional subjects are complex and less prototypical. Thus, distributing such subjects in the theme may be characterized as unmarked (natural or usual) in German, while this kind of subject in the *forfelt* may be seen as more marked in Norwegian. Therefore, a German text may be characterized as subject-centred, while a Norwegian one may not. In general, a German text is about what a prominent subject-agent does, while in Norwegian the subject is less specified and, being notional, is one of numerous elements of an action chain that are expected to be introduced into the text space successively.

Moreover, in a German text adverbials, and complex adverbials in particular, are consistently placed in the sentence-initial position, while they typically appear in the sentence-final position in Norwegian. Therefore, complex adverbials in sentence openings are unmarked in German, while their appearance in Norwegian may be seen as more marked.

Treating the theme as a conceptual ground or a frame in the form of adverbial, we can also conclude that it is prototypically conceived in terms of specified settings in German. Such settings (pertaining to time, location, condition, etc.) aim to create text continuity and coherence, which are characterized in detail. In Norwegian, on the contrary, the presence of the nominal *DET* in a sentence opening (the so-called light sentence opening) causes such a frame to be construed as schematic or as a kind of “taking a wide-angle perspective on a scene” where an action occurs, as Smith (2004: 81) expresses it. The function of the rhematic settings in this language is to elaborate this schematic frame for the action. Thus, the range of them may be seen as narrower.

Finally, it may be concluded that what emphasises the main difference in meaning construal (Langacker 1987) in a text in Norwegian and German in such cases is based on different perspectives implied in these languages. In German, a relatively narrow point of view is implied, which means that the presence of several details connected with an action is taken for granted (i.e. prominent and accessible for the addressee). In Norwegian, the same action is expected to be seen as sequential and governed by the end-weight principle within a schematic frame – a scene construal that implies a more distant position in a linguistic conceptualization.

Other factors determining the reasons behind this phenomenon need further investigation. Nevertheless, the presented results may be seen as significant in translator training. They can also be used in teaching Norwegian and German as foreign languages. What has been done by professional translators in Norwegian-to-German translation may be applied in practical writing training of students, especially at the beginning of their learning process, and it may help them to create a text structure in a foreign language more consciously.

## References

- ALTENBERG Bengt (1998): Connectors and sentence openings in English and Swedish. – [In:] Stig JOHANSSON, Signe OKSEFJELL (eds.) *Corpora and Cross-linguistic Research. Theory, Method, and Case Studies*. – Amsterdam: Rodopi, 117–142.
- CHAFE Wallace (1994): *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time. The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing*. – Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press.
- CHESTERMAN Andrew (2011): Reflections on the Literal Translation Hypothesis. – [In:] Cecilia ALVSTAD, Adelina HILD, Elisabet TISELIUS (eds.): *Methods and Strategies of Process Research*. – Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 23–35.
- DANEŠ František (1974): Functional Sentence Perspective and the organization of the text. – [In:] František DANEŠ (ed.): *Papers on Functional Sentence Perspective*. – Prague: Academia, 106–128.
- ENGLUND DIMITROVA Birgitta (1993): Semantic change in translation – a cognitive perspective. – [In:] Yves GAMBIER, Jorma TOMMOLA (eds.): *Translation and Knowledge*. SSOTT IV. – Turku: University of Turku, Centre for Translation and Interpreting, 285–296.
- FAARLUND Jan Terje, LIE Svein, VANNEBO Kjell Ivar (1997): *Norsk Referansegrammatikk*. – Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- FABRICIUS-HANSEN Cathrine (1998): Information density and translation, with special reference to German – Norwegian – English. – [In:] Stig JOHANSSON, Signe OKSEFJELL (eds.): *Corpora and Cross-linguistic Research. Theory, Method, and Case Studies*. – Amsterdam: Rodopi, 197–234.
- FILIPOVIĆ Luna (2014): Efficiency of the bilingual mind. Clues from processing, memory, and second language acquisition studies. – [In:] Luna FILIPOVIĆ, Martin PÜTZ (eds.): *Multilingual Cognition and Language Use. Processing and typological perspectives*. – Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 205–227.
- HALLIDAY Michael Alexander Krikwood (1994): *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* [2<sup>nd</sup> edition]. – London–New York: Arnold.
- HALVERSON Sandra (2015): Cognitive Translation Studies and the merging of empirical paradigms. The case of ‘literal translation’. – *Translation Spaces* 4(2), 310–340.
- HARTSUIKER Robert J., PICKERING Martin J., VELTKAMP Eline (2004): Is Syntax Separate or Shared Between Languages? Cross-Linguistic Syntactic Priming in Spanish-English Bilinguals. – *Psychological Science* 15 (6), 409–414.
- HASSELGÅRD Hilde (1997): Sentence openings in English and Norwegian. – [In:] Magnus LJUNG (ed.): *Corpus-based studies in English. Papers from the 17<sup>th</sup> International Conference on English Language Research on Computerized Corpora*. – Amsterdam: Rodopi, 3–20.
- HASSELGÅRD Hilde (1998): Thematic structure in translation between English and Norwegian. – [In:] Stig JOHANSSON, Signe OKSEFJELL (eds.): *Corpora and Cross-linguistic Research. Theory, Method, and Case Studies*. – Amsterdam: Rodopi, 145–167.
- HASSELGÅRD Hilde (2004): Thematic choices in English and Norwegian. – *Functions of Language* 11(2), 187–212.
- HENSON Richard (2009): Priming. – [In:] Larry S. SQUIRE (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Neuroscience* vol. 7. – London: Academic Press, 1055–1063.
- HOLMES Philip, ENGER Has-Olav (2018): *Norwegian. A Comprehensive Grammar*. – London–New York: Routledge.
- IVIR Vladimir (1981): Formal correspondence vs. Translation equivalence revisited. – *Poetics Today* 2(4), 51–59.
- JOHANSSON Stig (2005): Sentence openings in translation from English into Norwegian. – *Norsk Lingvistisk Tidsskrift* 23, 3–35.



- JOHANSSON Stig (2007): *Seeing through multilingual corpora: On the Use of Corpora in Contrastive Studies*. – Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- LANGACKER Ronald W. (1987): *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Volume I. Theoretical Prerequisites*. – Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- LEVÝ Jiří (1967): Translation as a Decision Process. – [In:] *To Honour Roman Jakobson*, vol. 2, 1171–1182. – The Hague: Mouton.
- LOEBELL Helga, BOCK Kathryn (2003): Structural Priming across languages. – *Linguistics* 41(5), 791–824.
- MAIER Robert M., PICKERING Martin J., HARTSUIKER Robert J. (2016): Does translation involve structural priming? – *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, DOI 10: 1–15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17470218.2016.1194439>. (Accessed 18.12.2016).
- RAMM Wiebke (2004): Sentence boundary adjustments in Norwegian – German and German – Norwegian translations: First results of a corpus-based study. – [In:] Karin AJMER, Hilde HASSELGÅRD (eds.): *Translation and Corpora. Selected Papers from the Göteborg–Oslo Symposium 18–19 October 2003*. – Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 129–147.
- RØRVIK Sylvi (2004). Thematic progression in translation of fiction from English into Norwegian. – [In:] Karin AJMER, Hilde HASSELGÅRD (eds.): *Translation and Corpora. Selected Papers from the Göteborg–Oslo Symposium 18–19 October 2003*. – Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 149–161.
- SMITH Michael B. (2004): Cataphoric Pronouns as Mental Space Designators. Their Conceptual Import and Discourse Function. – [In:] Ellen CONTINI-MORAVA, Robert S. KIRSNER, Betsy RODRIGUEZ-BACHILLER (eds.): *Cognitive and Communicative Approaches to Linguistic Analysis*. – Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 61–90.
- TIRKKONEN-CONDIT Sonja (2005): The monitor model revisited: Evidence from process research. – *Translators' Journal* 50(2), 405–414.
- TOURY Gideon (1995): *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. – Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- VINAY Jean-Paul, DARBELNET Jean (1995): *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*. – Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- WONG May L-Y (2010): “There are many ways to translate it” – Existential constructions in English – Chinese translation. – *Languages in Contrast* 10(1), 29–53.